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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LOME 000452

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SUBJECT: LUNCH WITH TOGO'S OPPOSITION THE DAY BEFORE THE  
DIALOGUE

REF: LOME 447

Classified By: Ambassador David B. Dunn, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Summary. On April 20, the day before the opening of the long-awaited re-launch of the national dialogue, the Ambassador held a luncheon meeting with four high-level members of the three principal opposition parties. The guests were wary but hopeful that the dialogue, based on an eight point agenda that was released by the GoT on April 18, would go well. Embassy agrees with their strongly-expressed view that, after the failures of the 1992 and the 1999 negotiations with the GoT, follow-through on what will be agreed in the dialogue will be essential for a long-term resolution to Togo's economic and governance crisis. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On April 20, the day before the opening of the long-awaited re-launch of the national dialogue, the Ambassador held a luncheon meeting at the EMR with four high-level members of the three principal opposition parties. In attendance were Patrick Lawson, Vice President and Jean Pierre Fabre, Secretary General of the Union des Forces de Changement (UFC), Gahoun Hegbor, Vice President of the Comite d'Action pour le Renouveau (CAR), and Martin Aduayom, Joint Secretary General of the Convention Democratique des Peuples

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Africains (CDPA) along with the DCM. The four men are well-acquainted and obviously at ease with each other.

¶3. (U) Background: The subject of the national dialogue has been in the news for the last six months. The GoT is motivated to check off the last two (national dialogue and legislative elections) of the 22 commitments made to the European Union in April 2004 in order for the development money tap to be turned back on for Togo. The opposition parties have been playing hard to get (to the negotiating table). The largest opposition party, the UFC, continues to be hindered by its schizophrenic leadership arrangement in which its charismatic leader Gilchrist Olympio is, for all practical purposes, permanently absent from Togo. The issues of venue and need for a facilitator were batted about for months. More recently, Blaise Campaore, president of Burkina Faso, has begun to play a role in getting the parties to the table. The final iteration will have the dialogue take place in Lome without outside facilitation, at least the initial stages. Note: The formula recommended by CAR National President Yawovi Agboyibo, whereby the Togoles parties will attempt to resolve the issues by themselves but have recourse to an outside facilitator if any items prove too thorny,

appears to have been tacitly adopted by all. End note.

14. (U) On April 18, a synopsis of proposals and observations about the proposed dialogue re-launch was released by the GoT, and published in a private newspaper. Curiously, it was not published in the government-owned daily, "Togo-Presse." The synopsis names the participants, mentions format, lists an agenda of eight objectives and suggests ten days of debate to reach an agreement. The eight dialogue objectives follow:

- 1) Implementation of the 22 commitments and additional proposals to improve such implementation.
- 2) Regulations, and institutional and legislative reforms to allow free and democratic elections through revisions to the electoral framework and the election-related committees.
- 3) Reinforcement of conditions leading to the repatriation and social reintegration of refugees.
- 4) Reforms to the Army and security forces under the auspices of foreign partners.
- 5) Modalities to fight impunity and possible indemnification of all victims.
- 6) Resolving the electoral litigation remaining from the 2005 presidential election.
- 7) Installation of a follow-up mechanism which could become a permanent framework for gathering and discussing subjects of national interest.
- 8) Formation of a transitional government of national unity.

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15. (U) At the luncheon, the guests seemed to think that the agenda items comprised a reasonable base from which to start a dialogue. When asked about the ten-day time period, they felt that ten days had to be a guideline rather than a period with a hard and fast end point. All four were hopeful that the dialogue would go well.

16. (C) Although the guests expressed hope that the dialogue would go well, they seemed wary and skeptical about facilitators and negotiations. They were, to a man, insistent on the need for effective follow through. They noted that the dialogues of 1992 and 1999 failed. UFC's Fabre recalled that, in 1999, the EU paid for a facilitator from France. Fabre contended that the facilitator was conveying information on the UFC's negotiating position to the GoT via the Embassy of France to the detriment of the UFC. UFC's Lawson said he was left with a very bad taste in his mouth from the 1999 negotiation. In going through the list of facilitators who were proposed for this dialogue, the group laughed when one particular name was mentioned, since that person had, a few years ago, gone to (former President) Eyadema's residence to receive an award from the GoT. CAR's Hegbor recalled that the dialogue of 1992 was also a failure for lack of follow through on what was agreed.

17. (C) While hopeful that the international community will help to resolve Togo's long term crisis, they have little confidence that much help will be forthcoming from overseas. Fabre noted that when the UN report on the violence in April and May 2005 was released, detailing the deaths of 500-600 people, no one did anything about it. Aduayom commented that the international community, mainly ECOWAS, had a hand in organizing last April's disastrous elections. Fabre pointed out that it was a coup d'etat which put Faure Gnassingbe in office the first time and then a constitutional coup d'etat that put him in office the second time, and the international community did nothing about it.

¶8. (C) The group seemed very wary of French government policy. They recalled the overwhelming French cultural component to their respective educations and to the virtual total lack of instruction on Togolese and African history. The recalled the close relationship between French President Jacques Chirac and President Eyadema until Eyadema's death last year. They felt the French Embassy had a hand in the failure of the 1999 negotiations. They remain suspicious of France's motives in Togo vis-a-vis their hopes for a new day for Togo.

¶9. (C) Comment: The mood around the table vacillated between resigned fatalism and guarded optimism. Each participant indicated in his own way that he saw no way forward for Togo other than a successful outcome to the dialogue. Concern regarding implementation of agreed actions was a preponderant theme. To help keep our guests focused on the reality that the burden of fixing Togolese problems rests squarely with the Togolese themselves, we avoided taking the bait on the question of the international community "abandoning" Togo. End Comment.

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